

wisconsin | humanities | council
community through conversation

To: Members of the Committee on Tourism, Recreation and State Properties
From: Dean Bakopoulos, Executive Director, Wisconsin Humanities Council
Date: March 29, 2007
Re: Assembly Bill 66

I'm sorry that I am not at today's public meeting to share these comments in person; I have meetings with grant applicants in the southwestern corner of the state today.

However, I did want to express my support for Assembly Bill 66 authorizing the Wisconsin Health and Educational Facilities Authority to issue bonds to finance projects related to cultural facilities.

It makes excellent sense to give arts and humanities institutions the same opportunity to obtain tax-exempt bonding that is currently offered to health and educational facilities. Arts and humanities institutions create jobs, enhance tourism, and keep main streets (in towns of all sizes) vital and vibrant; even more importantly, they provide community gathering places where the ideas and values of our culture are celebrated, explored and discussed. These shared experiences and conversations are essential to a healthy, vibrant civic life.

While federal and state funding for the humanities is stagnant or shrinking (i.e. only seven-percent of the \$1 million WHC budget comes from state dollars, one of the lowest levels of state funding in the nation), tax-exempt bonding is one way to support this very important part of our civic infrastructure without adding more items to the state's tight budget.

Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this proposal further. I can be reached at 608.265.5594 or via e-mail at ccbakopoulos@wisc.edu.

DB

March 29, 2007

The Honorable Steve Wieckert
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953



Representative Wieckert:

On behalf of the members and the board of I am writing in support of Assembly Bill #66 authorizing the Wisconsin Health and Educational Facilities Authority to issue bonds to finance cultural facilities.

As a significant cultural property and resource for the community, Bergstrom-Mahler Museum, provides an educational service to the community as a whole and serves as a significant archival resource for its glass paperweight collection internationally. Your proposed amended bill recognizes the important educational opportunities cultural organizations provide.

As amended the bill will enable nonprofit arts and cultural organizations to pursue capital facilities projects and re-financing at affordable rates. This bill places cultural facilities at parity with education and health care projects. Studies by Americans for the Arts, Arts Wisconsin and the Wisconsin Department of Tourism demonstrate that arts and culture provide significant economic impact to the state.


The timing for museum and cultural facility visibility could not be better. Efforts at the federal level by the Institute of Museums and Library Services, the American Association of State and Local History, as well as the American Association of Museums and the Association of Midwest Museums, are all working to support the Federal Grant Formula Coalition.

Current efforts in cultural tourism, as well as emphasis on "the Creative Economy" suggest that cultural facilities have a major role in the substantiating and sustaining the quality of life in a region, in our case, North East Wisconsin is a vital destination and rapidly developing part of the state with many museums within a small radius.

Clearly it is in the best interests of the state of Wisconsin to keep our creative talent here. Cultural facilities are a powerful way to help achieve a workforce for our new economy and fill the educational gap for schools and educational institutions that have found it necessary to make cutbacks in their programs. Museums and cultural facilities provide an extended classroom with actual objects as points of departure.

I thank you for your forethought in sponsoring this bill that has the potential to provide low cost funding for building initiatives.

Sincerely,


Jan Smith
Executive Director
Bergstrom Mahler Museum
Neenah, WI

BERGSTROM - MAHLER MUSEUM

www.paperweightmuseum.com



Cultural Alliance of
Greater Milwaukee

310 E. Buffalo St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414.347.0131

February 27, 2007

The Honorable Steve Wieckert
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53708-8953

Representative Wieckert,

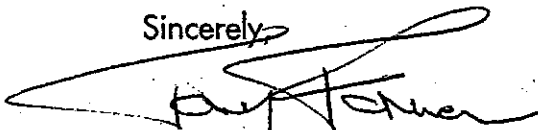
On behalf of the members and the board of the Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee I am writing in support of Assembly Bill #66 authorizing the Wisconsin Health and Educational Facilities Authority to issue bonds to finance cultural facilities.

As the organization unifying the cultural industry of southeast Wisconsin, The Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee endorses this amended legislation. As amended the bill will enable nonprofit arts and cultural organizations to pursue capital facilities projects and re-financing at affordable rates. This bill places cultural facilities at parity with education and health care projects. Studies by Americans for the Arts, and our own research, demonstrate that arts and culture provide significant economic impact to the state. In 2004 nonprofit arts organizations and their audiences had expenditures of over \$166.5 million a year in Milwaukee alone¹. This spring new figures will be released that will show a significant increase in the economic impact of the nonprofit arts industry.

Richard Florida in his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* makes a case for the far reaching impact that arts and cultural facilities have on their communities. Beyond immediate economic impact, communities that have invested in cultural facilities find that they attract and retain younger, creative and innovative employees. Clearly it is in the best interests of the state of Wisconsin to keep our creative talent here. Cultural facilities are a powerful way to help achieve a workforce for our new economy.

Thank you for sponsoring this legislation to provide low cost quality financing for the very institutions that provide the high quality of life we have come to expect in Wisconsin.

Sincerely,



Tony Forman
Executive Director





Governor
James E. Doyle

March 28, 2007

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State Representative Dean Kaufert, Chairperson
Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation and State Properties
Room 15 North
State Capitol

Dear Chairperson Kaufert:

On behalf of the Wisconsin Arts Board, I want to register our support of Assembly Bill 66. This bill will allow the Wisconsin Health and Educational Facilities Authority (WHEFA) to issue bonds to finance projects or refinance debt undertaken by cultural institutions for cultural facilities. This will be an important development tool for cultural institutions across our state.

The number and quality of Wisconsin's cultural facilities has grown over the past number of years. Citizens from communities large and small have raised private money to support the cultural institutions they value. AB 66 would allow an important new source of funding for these.

Such a program is not unprecedented. Bonding programs for cultural facilities have been established or are being discussed in states such as Colorado, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Montana, and Ohio.

Through this bill the WHEFA will be making an additional investment in the health and education of communities throughout our state. The arts are part of healthy Wisconsin communities in our rural areas and urban centers. They are engines of community and economic development. They also play an integral role in education, in our K-12 schools and in the lifelong learning of our citizens.

We thank you and the Committee for taking up Assembly Bill 66 and Representative Steve Wieckert for his important work on this issue. I look forward to the Committee's favorable determination on this bill.

Sincerely,

George T. Tzougros
Executive Director





400 WEST COLLEGE AVENUE
APPLETON WISCONSIN 54911
www.FoxCitiesPAC.com

28 November 2006

The Honorable Steve Wiecek
P.O. Box 8953
Madison
WI 53708-8953

Dear Steve,

Please accept this letter as an enthusiastic and strong voice of support for LRB-0708.

This legislation, if enacted, would be very beneficial to the growing cultural economy in Wisconsin and in large measure offer cultural institutions a needed stimulus and opportunity to drive their local economic impact further.

As the state continues to build upon the positive gains achieved in our "creative industries" and their multiple impact on the economy of Wisconsin by attracting and retaining businesses and top leadership executives; enhancing the quality of life for all segments of our population; and increasing the revenue stream from this nonprofit sector of activity in Wisconsin, this bill will provide the necessary basis for future growth without cost to the operating budget of the state.

This legislation will have a statewide benefit and know no boundaries in its impact for all citizens of Wisconsin. Every best wish for the success of this bill and thank you for championing it during the 2007-2008 legislative session.

Sincerely,

Susan Stockton, president
Fox Cities Performing Arts Center

Testimony of State Representative Steve Wieckert

Assembly Bill 66 – WHEFA Cultural Facilities *Assembly Committee on Tourism, Recreation, & State Properties* *300 Northeast – March 29, 2007*

Good morning chairman Dean Kaufert and committee members. Thank you for the opportunity to come before you today to discuss Assembly Bill 66, which would help to support museums, art centers, and other cultural facilities in Wisconsin.

This legislation would allow cultural centers, museums, and other similar facilities to receive a federal tax exemption on bonding for capital projects. Wisconsin would not be financially responsible for these bonds.

We can continue to support and advance the interests of the arts and humanities in Wisconsin, even in challenging economic times and tight budgets. Wisconsin would not lose any revenue as a result of this bill, because this is a federal tax exemption.

This initiative will help promote the arts and cultural activities in Wisconsin. It will add to our quality of life and help encourage economic growth and development, as well as be an asset to our tourism industry.

These arts-based businesses play an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy. They employ people, spend money locally, and are a cornerstone of tourism in Wisconsin. There are currently about 8,892 arts-related businesses in Wisconsin that employ 43,559 people.

This legislation passed the Assembly in previous sessions by a large margin, however the session ended before the State Senate could fully consider the bill.

This legislation is supported by the Wisconsin Health & Educational Facilities Authority (WHEFA), the Wisconsin Society of Architects, the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center, and the Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee.

Thank you for your consideration. At this time I would be happy to answer any questions of the committee.

Wisconsin Health and Educational Facilities Authority
18000 West Sarah Lane, Suite 300
Brookfield, Wisconsin 53045-5841
Phone (262) 792-0466 Fax (262) 792-0649

LAWRENCE R. NINES
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

November 21, 2006

Scott Becher
Office of Rep. Steve Wieckert
P.O. Box 8953
Madison, WI 53703

Re: LRB 0708 and LRB 0703

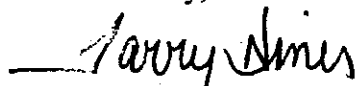
Dear Scott:

I understand that your office is interested in reintroducing legislation to make tax-exempt cultural facilities eligible for financing through WHEFA (LRB 0708) and bonds issued by WHEFA for education purposes exempt from state tax (LRB 0703).

WHEFA supports both initiatives and hopes for successful legislative consideration. Additional support for the cultural facilities legislation can be obtained from Tony Forman, Executive Director of the Cultural Alliance of Greater Milwaukee at (414) 247-0131 or tforman@culturalalliancemke.org.

If we can help in any way please let me know.

Sincerely,



Larry Nines
Executive Director